



**Department of  
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# **News Release**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **Veterans Head to Creative Arts Festival in South Dakota**

WASHINGTON – Nearly 120 veterans from across the country who are medal winners in national dance, drama, creative writing, music or visual arts competitions are preparing to attend the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival in Rapid City, S.D., October 16-22.

"Our talented veterans are shining examples of the healing power of the arts," said the Honorable R. James Nicholson, Secretary of Veterans Affairs. "Many participants were introduced to the arts in the rehabilitation programs of the Department of Veterans Affairs. The arts are one of many tools that VA uses in the recovery of our heroes."

The Creative Arts Festival, presented by VA, Help Hospitalized Veterans (HHV) and the American Legion Auxiliary (ALA), is the culmination of a year-long fine arts talent competition involving more than 2,800 participants nationwide. The festival is open to all veterans receiving care at VA medical facilities. This year, the VA Black Hills Health Care System is hosting the event.

"HHV believes the festival provides a venue that is far reaching in therapeutic value for America's heroes," said Roger Chapin, the founder and president of Help Hospitalized Veterans. "It highlights veterans' abilities rather than their disabilities. I encourage the public to attend the festival in Rapid City to experience the wonderful talents of America's veterans."

The week of rehearsals and workshops will conclude on Sunday, October 22, with a visual art exhibit and gala variety stage show at the Rushmore Plaza Civic Center, which will be edited for television and distributed nationally to Public Broadcasting Systems television stations across the country for use during the week of Veterans Day.

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## Arts Festival 2/2/2/2

"Members of the ALA are proud to be a part of broadcasting the 2006 National Veterans Creative Arts Festival in hope that more Americans will understand the need for and the value of veterans' rehabilitation programs," said Carol Van Kirk, Past National President of the American Legion Auxiliary. "Veterans treated in local VA facilities across our nation who enter this competitive arena benefit as part of their healing process, both physically and emotionally. Support of the festival has provided our organization with yet another opportunity to assist and honor our veterans."

Artists will exhibit their work beginning at 12:30 p.m. on October 22 at Rushmore Plaza Civic Center. At 2:00 p.m., the gala stage show begins with performances in music, drama, creative writing and dance, backed by a professional orchestra. Renowned actress of Hollywood's golden era, Jane Powell, will be the mistress of ceremonies.

Secretary Nicholson will attend the festival to visit with veterans and watch the stage show. Actress Bo Derek, Honorary Chairperson of VA's National Rehabilitation Special Events, is also expected to attend the festival again this year.

For the first time, Americans nationwide will have the opportunity to see the festival in a syndicated television broadcast. The festival program will be taped by South Dakota Public Broadcasting and distributed through the National Educational Telecommunications Association to Public Broadcasting System stations nationwide. The target date for the broadcast on local PBS affiliates is the week of Veterans Day, November 6-10.

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For further information about the festival, contact Kim Byers, public affairs coordinator, at (734) 761-7824, or log on to the festival's Web site: [www.creativeartsfestival.org](http://www.creativeartsfestival.org). During the festival call (605) 718-5070.